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at the east end of the cave, with many fish in it—'cenote fish'—which are said to be blind, like those in the Mammoth cave. Roots of trees hang pendant in clusters, behind which lizards and iguanas dart along the ledges; swallows circle in dense masses about the arch, forming a complete ring, and making a deafening, whirring noise with their wings."

Another chapter is devoted to Mayapan and the Mayas, the author indulging in severe but well merited criticism of the methods of M. Charnay and of Dr. L. Plongeon, and for their hasty conclusions, based on preconceived notions, as to the age and builders of the ruined cities they have so zealously explored.

We are then treated to accounts of the logwood forests and to scraps of the natural history of the north coast of Yucatan. Palenque was not visited by the author, though a chapter is devoted to this engrossing topic.

In the account of Mexico the chapter on Popocatapetl and the account of the ride from Vera Cruz to Mexico brings out clearly the nature of the better known Mexican volcanoes and of the three regions passed over in going from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico. In Southern Mexico the palaces of Mitla, among which Mr. Ober spent a few days, are briefly described.

Though written to please the tastes of the public, we may be sure that the narrative is reliable, the information authentic, and that this book is, all in all, the best hand-book of Mexico the intending visitor to that interesting country can take along with him.

BRIEFER COURSE IN BOTANY.¹—We have examined this little volume with more than usual care. Two things command attention at once: First, that it is written by a teacher of experience; and second, that its author is both an acute observer and a thoroughly posted compiler. It is, in its text, a fresh book, that is, the presentation of the subject matter is done in such style as indicates that the author had thoroughly considered both the language and order of presentation of the facts.

The appearance of this book is most opportune. Botany, in this country, has largely passed through the preliminary period of *systematic work exclusively*. The great masters have arranged our vegetable hosts into an order which will, without serious change, stand for the next twenty years or more. And the growing need, as well as the growing desire, is to know more of the origin, structure and evolutionary tendencies of the individual plant. Good, cheap microscopes can now be had which make such studies possible. The Briefer Course in Botany, then, is just the book required to foster the existing disposition. There is nothing superficial in it, nothing needless introduced, nothing

¹ *American Science Series. Briefer Course in Botany.* By CHARLES E. BESSEY, M.Sc., Ph.D., professor of botany in Iowa Agricultural College. pp. 292. Published by Henry Holt & Co.

essential left out. The language is lucid; and as the crowning merit of the book, the author has introduced throughout the volume "*practical studies*" which direct the student in his efforts to see for himself all that the text teaches. It is hardly possible to estimate too highly the value of these "*studies*" as an educational force.

On the first page of the brief *Preface* the author gives his reasons for introduction of the terms *Zygophyta*, *Oöphyta* and *Carpophyta*. It is enough to say that to any one these reasons should be satisfactory. To the teachers who know the confusion caused in the minds of pupils by the older nomenclature, this change will probably be thoroughly welcome. It is an oversight that instead of asexual the author did not use the term nonsexual, for besides being contrary to best usage, asexual, by slight typographical blunder, is often made to read a sexual, just what is not intended. Hence asexual should not be used or perpetuated.

As indicating the scope of this little book we give the chapter headings:

- I. Protoplasm and Plant-cells.
- II. The Tissues of Plants.
- III. The Groups of Tissues, or Tissue Systems.
- IV. The Plant Body.
- V. The Chemistry and Physics of Plants.
- VI. Classification and Distribution of Plants.

A glance shows that the student is here plainly led from the natural foundation on simple facts up to the latest views and broadest generalizations.

We have but a single criticism to make. One more chapter is needed, which should briefly explain the terms used in analysis of plants.

There is a danger that we may run from one extreme to another in our teaching, and in our new love for morphological botany, neglect systematic botany too much. A part never can be greater than the whole, and we regret the tendency, already too marked, of being content to study cells and cell growth and aggregation, without being able to name the plant on which the observations are made. No one is better qualified than Professor Bessey to add this needed chapter. Another edition is sure to be called for soon, and when it appears we hope to find this one chapter added to what is already a most important and admirable work.—*J. T. Rothrock.*

THE PEOPLE'S CYCLOPEDIA.¹—This work, in three royal octavo volumes, contains a great deal of information in a condensed form. What it may be in other directions we do not know, but we cannot speak highly of its scientific value. But two well-

¹ Phillips and Hunt, New York. Edited by W. H. DePuy, LL.D., 1883.